

Prescott Farm

Environmental Education Center

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For Immediate Release

You're invited to Prescott Farm's Natural Playscape Grand Opening on Saturday, May 14. Come and PLAY!

Laconia, NH: All are welcome to come PLAY at the Grand Opening of Prescott Farm's Natural Playscape on Saturday, May 14 from 10:00am – 1:00pm. The Natural Playscape is right next to the Education Center located at 928 White Oaks Road. Bring your family and friends to enjoy this amazing addition to Prescott Farm and the Lakes Region community!



Thanks to a grant from NH Charitable Foundation in the spring of 2014, Prescott Farm brought in designer Rusty Keeler (author of the book *Natural Playscapes*) to work with us to design a master plan for the space. Keeler has worked with organizations and communities around the world to design spaces that bring nature to children in fun ways with hills to climb, dirt to dig, plants to explore, and water to splash, among many other things. We want Prescott Farm to be a place that families come to explore and play in the natural world together.

In November 2014, we received a second grant from NH Charitable Foundation that gave us the funding to implement the design. We worked with volunteers throughout 2015 and into the spring of this year to complete the Playscape. Volunteers from Lakes Region Rotary, Lakes Region Rotary Youth Leadership, Gilford Youth Center, Laconia Fire Department, Fusion, BJ's Wholesale Club of Tilton, Easter Seals of New Hampshire, Appalachian Teen Mountain Project, Bob Harrington and Ed Darling, helped make this project a reality.



Prescott Farm strongly believes in the importance of getting kids outside for their healthy development and well-being. Consider this:

Childhood play time in the outdoors has been in steady decline since the 1950's. Not only are today's kids over-scheduled, but they are increasingly disconnected from the natural world spending as much as 8 hours PER DAY inside in front of some sort of screen. A 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that children ages 8-18 are spending more than 7.5 hours a day watching TV and movies, playing video games, and using computers – not including homework-related use. This new reality was coined "nature deficit disorder" by author Richard Louv in his

book *Last Child in the Woods* and may be linked to higher rates of ADHD, obesity, depression, speech delays, aggressive behaviors.

Also, outdoor free play isn't just fun—it is vital to children's health & well-being! Kids that spend more time outside tend to have less stress, less anxiety and depression, lower rates of obesity, fewer symptoms of ADHD, and better immune system functioning, as well as better social behaviors, increased ability to learn and concentrate, a better sense of self and independence, more creativity, better self-discipline, better problem solving skills, more capacity for emotional and intellectual development, and a tendency to grow into more ecologically-minded adults.

In our Natural Playscape you will find a Forest Kitchen, Tree House, Music and Loose Parts areas, Teepee, Hill Slide, Tree Swing, Fairy House building area and more! Benches are located throughout the Playscape so families and friends can relax and watch their children play. The outskirts of the Playscape will include native plants and herbs as well as a couple Bear and Owl chainsaw-sculpted critters.

Prescott Farm is a non-profit organization that offers environmental education for all ages throughout the year including WildQuest camps, public programs, field trips, long-term partnerships with local elementary schools and NOW Fledglings Nature-Based Preschool. The 160 acre historic family farm features woodland and field trails, a "green" building with geothermal and solar energy systems, historic barns, an old-fashioned maple sugaring operation (during the month of March), heritage gardens, and forested pond. Prescott Farm is open year round, seven days a week from 9:00 – 4:00PM. It is free to come and go for a hike, explore the "green" building or play in our Natural Playscape!

We are excited to have this new addition to Prescott Farm and we want YOU to be able to enjoy it! Please join us for our Grand Opening on Saturday, May 14 from 10:00am – 1:00pm. For more information on our Natural Playscape visit www.prescottfarm.org. The Playscape will be open to the public seasonally, at no cost, from dawn till dusk daily. We encourage you to come PLAY and enjoy the natural world together!

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